

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY:EA/PRCM:OVARSTRONG

APPROVED BY:S/S-O:DLMACK

EA:RMILLER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USLO PEKING IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 039737

NODIS

FOLLOWING SECSTATE 039737 SENT ACTION USDEL SECRETARY FEB 19;
REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 039737 TOSEC 040083

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM EA - PHILIP C. HABIB

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (NIXON, RICHARD M.), CH, US

SUBJECT: BRIEFING MEMO: CHANGE IN NIXON TRAVEL PLANS

1. WE HAVE HAD A BRIEF FLAP OVER THE PRC AIRCRAFT THAT
WAS COMING TO THE US FOR FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON, BUT THE
MATTER HAS BEEN SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED AFTER CONSULTATIONS
BETWEEN THE WHITE HOUSE AND MR. NIXON.

2. ALL ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE FOR THE CHINESE AIRCRAFT
TO LAND AT LOS ANGELES AIRPORT ON FEBRUARY 20 WHEN WE
RECEIVED THIS AFTERNOON (FEBRUARY 18) A CABLE FROM AN
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AMERICAN CITIZEN CLAIMANT AGAINST THE PRC THREATENING TO

"IMPOUND" THE CHINESE PLANE IF IT LANDED ON US TERRITORY. THE CLAIMANT WAS RESIDENT IN LOS ANGELES AND ACCORDING TO THE DEPARTMENT'S RECORDS HAD CLAIMS AGAINST THE PRC TOTALLING OVER \$30,000 WHICH HAD BEEN VALIDATED BY THE FOREIGN CLAIMS SETTLEMENT COMMISSION.

3. CONSULTATIONS WITH L CONFIRMED THAT THERE WAS NO WAY TO PREVENT THE CLAIMANT FROM SEEKING TO ATTACH THE PRC AIRCRAFT. MOREOVER, ALTHOUGH WE HAD MADE CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR THIS EVENTUALITY, WE COULD NOT BE CERTAIN THAT WE COULD SECURE THE RELEASE OF THE AIRCRAFT (IF IT WERE ATTACHED) WITHIN THE THREE HOURS THAT IT WOULD BE ON THE

GROUND IN LOS ANGELES.

4. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, GENERAL SNOWCROFT DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON IN SAN CLEMENTE, AND THE DEPARTMENT WAS ASKED TO INFORM THE PRC LIAISON OFFICE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY FOR THE PRC AIRCRAFT TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES SINCE THE FORMER PRESIDENT WOULD MEET THE PLANE IN TOKYO AND THAT ANY QUESTIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO COLONEL BRENNAN IN SAN CLEMENTE.

5. WE CONVEYED THIS MESSAGE TO THE PRC LIAISON OFFICE, WHICH SEEMED SURPRISED BUT THANKED US FOR THE INFORMATION AND AGREED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH COLONEL BRENNAN. WE GAVE NO EXPLANATION OF THE ACTION, LEAVING THAT, AS REQUESTED, TO MR. NIXON'S OFFICE.

6. SINCE IT WAS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CHINESE HAD ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO SEND A PLANE TO THE US FOR MR. NIXON'S PARTY, IT IS A VIRTUAL CERTAINTY THAT THE STORY WILL COME OUT IN THE PRESS. WE BELIEVE ANY COMMENT SHOULD BE HANDLED BY MR. NIXON AND SO ARE PROVIDING GUIDANCE WHICH WILL HAVE THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN PASS THE QUESTION ON IF RAISED HERE. INGERSOLL UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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